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[History](#), [Middle Ages](#)



The Effects of Industrialization on Manchester, England 1750-1850 England in the 18th and 19th centuries changed dramatically as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which had many effects on the social structure of England and increased the gap between the rich and the poor. Because of this, industrialized English towns such as Manchester were both criticized and admired by poets, politicians, journalists, and outsiders, who were particularly from France. The most powerful points of view were from supporters of industrialization, those who opposed industrialization, journalists, and outsiders.

Supporters of the industrialization of Manchester were typically British politicians or businessmen, impressed by the progress and production of Manchester. One of these was Englishman W. H. Thomson, writer of History of Manchester to 1852. Thomson provides a map that shows the growth of Manchester over a period of one hundred years in which it transformed from a small town into a robust industrial city with railroads and canals. This map shows how industrialization leads to rapid population growth and expansion, making Thomson an obvious supporter of industrialization.

Another supporter of industrialization was Englishman Thomas B. Macaulay, a liberal member of parliament and a historian. In his essay, “Southey’s Colloquies,” Macaulay praises industrialization and Manchester for producing wealth for the nation, which in turn would improve the quality of life for the middle class and peasantry. A final supporter of industrialization was Wheeler and Co. , which praises the industrious spirit of Manchester in the preface to an 1852 business directory, shortly after Manchester was granted a royal charter as a city.

The authors owe the fruits of the city's labor to its "energetic exertions and enterprising spirit," which is an unrealistic description of the motivations of the working class, and the preface was likely propaganda, being in association with the Crown. The supporters of industrialization were the ones becoming richer by it. They were separated from the working class and did not understand their plight. Those who opposed the industrialization of Manchester were more concerned with the well-being of those affected by it.

These were poets, women, socialists, and health reformers who were disturbed by the living and working conditions of the middle class and the peasantry. One protester was Robert Southey, an English Romantic poet and author of *Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* in 1829. Being a Romantic poet, Southey laments on the industrialization of the city and describes it as a miserable place where the buildings which are "without their antiquity, without their beauty, without their holiness," and where, "when the bell rings, it is to call the wretches to their work instead of their prayers. Another protester is Frances Anne Kemble, an actress, poet, and dramatist, who, in her account of a journey of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830, depicts a protest by the disgruntled working class over Corn Laws, which were tariffs on imported grain. In her depiction, the protesters scorn the "triumphs of machinery" and the "gain and glory which wealthy Manchester men were likely to derive from it." This is a very Romantic depiction, as the protesters are breaking free from their bonds to choose liberty over wealth.

A final protester was Edwin Chadwick a public health reformer, who, in his Report of the Sanitary Conditions of the Laboring Population of Great Britain, argued that the cramped conditions, unsanitary practices, and air pollution of Manchester greatly lower the average life of its citizens, and that more lives are lost due to unsanitary conditions in industrial cities than in modern wars. Journalists reporting on life in Manchester were sometimes in favor of industrialization, but some opposed it.

One journal in favor of the industrialization of Manchester featured an article by William Alexander Abram, a journalist and historian, in 1868. Abram claimed that conditions had increased dramatically since the early Industrial Era through law reform. A journal that was opposed to the industrialization of Manchester was the Lancet, a British medical journal founded and edited by Thomas Wakley. In 1843, The Lancet published a chart displaying the average age of death in four districts, two of which were industrial and two of which were rural.

The average age of death in the industrial districts was far younger, but was especially young in Manchester, showing that Manchester was indeed the unhealthiest of industrial cities. A final journal that protested the industrialization of Manchester was The Graphic, a magazine that dealt with social issues. The Graphic published a picture of a view from Blackfriars Bridge over the river Irwell in the 1870s. The picture was a very dirty depiction of Manchester, showing smokestacks that blotted out the sky with black plumes of smoke and waste pouring directly into the river Irwell, both of which caused tremendous health issues for the people of Manchester.

Outsiders who visited Manchester in the 19th century were often disgusted by the monochromatic, unsanitary, and dangerous lifestyle of the laboring class of Manchester. These were typically French socialists who spoke out against the maltreatment of the poor by the rich. One such Frenchman was Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *Journeys to England and Ireland* in 1835.

De Tocqueville, a socialist, tells us that the city of Manchester is based on the successes of individuals and the enslavement of others, rather than the success of society as a whole. Another French Socialist opposed to the industrialization of Manchester is Flora Tristan, a women's rights advocate, who published her journal in 1842. The fact that it is her private journal makes it the most credible source to the opposition of industrialization because she is merely reflecting and not attempting to sway anyone's mind. Tristan describes the working class of Manchester as sick and emaciated, and ends her entry with this lamentation: " O God!

Can progress be bought only at the cost of men's lives? " The industrialization of Manchester in the 18th and 19th centuries created wealth for the rich, but conditions for the laboring class worsened, and the gap between rich and poor increased. Many poets, socialists, and health reformers criticized the industrialization of Manchester, but politicians and business praised the industrious spirit of the city that filled their pockets. All of these feelings led to the revolutions of the 19th century and the rise of socialism and communism.